

Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 MCT-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 A-01 USSS-00 DODE-00 H-02 L-03

PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 AID-05 OPR-02 SCS-03 SCA-01

DHA-02 /073 W

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R 061828Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7446

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 6592

FROM RSO FOR A/SY/FO, A/SY/T, ARA/EX

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINS, AR

SUBJECT: GRENADE LAUNCHERS FOUND IN FRONT OF SHERATON HOTEL

1. THIS DATE, 5 OCT, RSO'S WERE PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FROM A MEMBER OF THE GOA FEDERAL POLICE PRESIDENTIAL PROTECTIVE DIVISION AND THE CHIEF OF THE 46TH PRECINCT OF FEDERAL POLICE. ON MONDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4, SIX GRENADES IN LAUNCHERS WERE FOUND AT 1010 HOURS BY A 46TH PRECINCT PATROL CAR IN A PARK ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE SHERATON HOTEL. THEY WERE SITTING ATOP A UTILITY COMPANY TOOL BOX AND WERE COVERED WITH BURLAP. THE PATROL IMMEDIATELY CALLED THE BOMB SQUAD WHICH DEACTIVATED THE GRENADES AT 1017 HOURS, 3 MINUTES BEFORE THEY WERE DESTINED TO BE LAUNCHED AT THE HOTEL. PRECINCT CHIEF THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE SET TO BE LAUNCHED AROUND THE TIME AMERICAN ACTRESS RITA HAYWORTH, WHO IS STAYING AT THE SHERATON, WAS TO LEAVE. WITH PRESS COVERAGE OF MISS HAYWORTH, THE GRENADE ATTACK COULD HAVE BEEN TURNED INTO PUBLICITY COUP FOR THE TERRORISTS.

2. THE PRESIDENTIAL PROTECTIVE DIVISION MEMBER PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING TECHNICAL INFORMATION: THE GRENADES WERE
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LOCATED SIDE BY SIDE IN CARDBOARD LAUNCHERS (50 CM. X 7 CM)

ARRANGED AT AN ANGLE TO TRAVEL APPROXIMATELY 70 METERS. SIMULTANEOUS LAUNCHING OF THE GRENADES WAS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY A CLOCK AND BATTERY DEVICE WHICH WOULD IGNITE A POTASSIUM CHLORATE FUSE. THE FUSE WOULD IN TURN IGNITE A BLACK POWDER CHARGE BENEATH EACH GRENADE. IGNITION OF THIS CHARGE WOULD LAUNCH THE GRENADES AND SIMULTANEOUSLY IGNITE A SLOWER-BURNING FUSE CONNECTED TO EACH GRENADE. AFTER A SPECIFIC TIME OF FLIGHT, THE FUSE WOULD DETONATE THE FIVE GRAMS OF BLACK POWDER AND ALUMINUM CONTAINED IN EACH GRENADE.

3. PRESIDENTIAL PROTECTIVE SOURCE STATED THAT HAD ONE OF THE GRENADES HIT A WINDOW AT THE TIME OF DETONATION, IT WOULD HAVE GONE THRU THE WINDOW. HOWEVER, THE CHARGE WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO PENETRATE CONCRETE WALLS. SOURCE SAID THESE GRENADES WERE DESIGNED TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF TERROR. HE FURTHER STATED THAT THESE GRENADES MAY HAVE BEEN PLACED AS AN EXPERIMENTAL DEVICE TO DETERMINE RANGE, ELEVATION AND WINDAGE FOR USE OF THE 70 MM. GRENADE WHICH HAS THE CAPABILITY OF PENETRATING 7MM OF STEEL.

4. IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, HE STATED THAT IT WAS TRUE THE SECURITY FORCES WERE HAVING SUCCESS AGAINST THE MONTONEROS AND ERP, BUT THAT THE MONTONEROS WERE STILL ABLE TO RECRUIT REPLACEMENTS. THEIR BASIC RECRUITING DRIVE NOW IS IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS, AS OPPOSED TO THE UNIVERSITIES. HE STATED THAT INCIDENTS SUCH AS THE ATTEMPT TO GRENADE THE SHERATON WERE USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRAINING THESE RECRUITS, I.E. THAT THEY WOULD START WITH DISTRIBUTING PROPAGANDA OR THE PAINTING OF SLOGANS, PROGRESS TO PROPAGANDA BOMBING, AND GO FROM THERE INTO ATTACKS ON POLICE STATIONS, ASSASSINATIONS AND DEMILITATION BOMBING.

5. RSO COMMENT: SUCCESS OF THIS ATTEMPT AT GRENADING THE SHERATON AND THE ATTEMPT ON PRESIDENT VIDELA'S LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN WIDELY-PUBLICIZED VICTORIES FOR THE TERRORISTS, HELPING BOTH THEIR MORALE AND THEIR RECRUITING. THUS, THE ABILITY OF THE TERRORISTS TO STRIKE, DESPITE ANY GOVT. SUCCESSES AGAINST THEM, CANNOT BE DOWNPLAYED

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